

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TANANA 00141 250936Z

15

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 SY-04 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 OPR-01 A-01 SCCT-01

EB-07 /092 W

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R 241435Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6870

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TANANARIVE 0141

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, MA

SUBJECT: MALAGASY RACIAL TENSIONS SURFACE; MINISTER OF INTERIOR
DENIES ACTIONS AGAINST COTIERS

DEPT PASS DIA

PRETORIA FOR RSO

REFS: TANANARIVE 0128 AND PREVIOUS

BEGIN SUMMARY: MINISTER OF INTERIOR HELD PRESS CONFERENCE
JAN 23 TO END POLITICAL RUMORS HERE, BUT WITHOUT MUCH
SUCCESS. LATEST DEVELOPMENT REPORTED BY PRESS IS THAT KEY
COTIER MILITARY OFFICER IN ABORTED COUP IS BEING PROTECTED
BY SPECIAL PARAMILITARY POLICE UNIT AT THEIR HDQS. POLICE
UNIT IS LARGELY COTIER AND REPORTEDLY IS NEGOTIATING WITH
GOMR. TWO APPARENTLY COTIER POLITICAL FIGURES FROM FORMER
REGIME ARRESTED ACCORDING TO PRESS. ALL OFFICERS ARRESTED
IN CONNECTION WITH COUP IDENTIFIED AS COTIERS BY PSM
PAPER. PRESS IN GENERAL CALLING FOR QUICK AND PEACEFUL
SOLUTION TO PRESENT PROBLEMS TO PREVENT RACIAL STRIFE.
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 TANANA 00141 250936Z

END SUMMARY.

1. MINISTER OF INTERIOR RICHARD RATSIMANDRAVA CONVOKED PRESS JAN 23 TO CONDEMN "FALSE RUMORS" CIRCULATING IN TANANARIVE. HE SAID THERE WERE DISCIPLINARY INVESTIGATIONS OF SOME OFFICERS UNDER WAY WITHIN MILITARY, UNDER SUPERVISION OF THEIR SUPERIORS, THAT WERE STRICTLY WITHIN DOMAIN OF MILITARY AND NOT UNDER HIS CONTROL. RATSIMANDRAVA DENIED RUMORS HE HAD DEMANDED DEATH PENALTY FOR CONSPIRATORS OR THAT HE HAD "BLACKLIST" OF COTIER LEADERS. HE SAID THESE RUMORS WERE BEING CIRCULATED TO START RIVALRIES BETWEEN GENDARMERIE AND ARMY, TO INCITE REVOLUTION AMONG COTIERS, TO CHECK HIS INVESTIGATIONS OF FOREIGN COMPANIES 7 WHICH HAVE IMPLICATED SOME VERY HIGHLY PLACED PEOPLE, AND TO DISCREDIT HIM, RATSIMANDRAVA SAID HIS TASKS WERE ASSIGNED BY HEAD OF GOVT AND IT WAS FOR GEN RAMANANTSOA TO JUDGE IF HE HAD CARRIED OUT HIS PROGRAM AS GENERAL HAD ORDERED. MADAGASCAR MATIN COMMENTED THAT RATSIMANDRAVA'S STATEMENT APPEARED TO BE LESS OF DENIAL (OF RUMORS) THAN ATTEMPT TO EXONERATE HIMSELF IN EYES OF PUBLIC. MINISTER OF INTERIOR AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION RAKOTOMALALA, WHO WAS ALSO PRESENT, DID NOT TAKE QUESTIONS FROM PRESS.

2. REPORT BY LATIMER RANGERS IN MADAGASCAR MATIN JAN 24 STATES THAT COLONEL BRECHARD RAJAONARISON, WHO WOULD HAVE BEEN PLACED AT HEAD OF GOVT IF DEC 31 PUTSCH HAD SUCCEEDED, HAS TAKEN REFUGE AT HEADQUARTERS OF GROUPE MOBILE DE LA POLICE (GMP). COLONEL HAS REPORTEDLY SUCCEEDED IN GAINING SUPPORT OF GMP WHO WILL NOT TURN HIM OVER TO GOMR AND ARE PREPARED TO FIGHT TO DEFEND HIM. FORMER COMMANDANT OF GMP PREDECESSOR ORGANIZATION, FORECES REPUBLICAINES DE SECURITE, MAJOR ISTASSE, WHO WAS REMOVED BY GEN RAMANANTSOA BECAUSE OF HIS CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH TSIRANANA, HAS REPORTEDLY JOINED COLONEL AT GMP HDQS. RANGERS POINTS OUT TRIBAL IMPLICATIONS OF THIS CONFRONTATION SINCE ALL OFFICERS ARRESTED ARE COTIERS UND GMP IS PREDOMINANTLY COTIER. RANGERS SAID HE WAS DENIED INTERVIEW WITH ISTESSE BECAUSE LATTER DID NOT WISH TO INTERFERE WITH ONGOING TALKS BETWEEN GMP AND GOMR. ARTICLE EMBELLISHED WITH SEVERAL PHOTOS OF HEAVILY ARMED POLICEMEN AROUND GMP HDQS.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TANANA 00141 250936Z

3. IN ANOTHER ITEM, MAD MATIN DESCRIBES INCREASED MILITARY AND GENDARMERIE PRESENCE AROUND TANANARIVE AND REPORTS GOMR DENIAL OF RANGERS' REPORT ABOVE. ARTICLE ALSO REPORTS ARRESTS OF FORMER DIRECTOR GENERAL OF INTERIOR BENOIT KIDJA AND BORA FLAVIEN, FORMER FUNCTIONARY OF MINISTRY OF CULTURE, BOTH EVIDENTLY COTIER. ARTICLE CONCLUDES WITH HOPE THAT GEN RAMANANTSOA WILL FIND WAY OUT OF PRESENT

IMPASSE.

4. MAD MATIN ALSO CARRIES COMMUNIQUE FROM PSM SIGNED BY RESAMPA REFERRING TO GMP SITUATION AND NOTING THAT BULK OF GMP ARE COTIERS. COMMUNIQUE CALLS UPON GOMR TO FIND "EQUITABLE AND PEACEFUL" SOLUTION. PSM PAPER BASY VAVA OF JAN 24 CARRIES ANOTHER COMMUNIQUE RENOUNCING USE OF FORCE BY PSM MEMBERS. PAPER ALSO LISTS NAMES OF ALL OFFICERS ARRESTED WITH THEIR TRIBAL ORIGINS (ALL COTIER) AND ALSO IDENTIFIES COL. BRECHARD RAJAONARISON AS OF ANTAISAKA TRIBE (ALSO COTIER).

5. TANANARIVE RICE SHORTAGE ALSO IN NEWS JAN 24 WITH MAD MATIN CALLING FOR URGENT GOVT ATTENTION TO THIS PROBLEM.

6. EMBASSY COMMENT: RANGERS' STORY OF GMP, WHICH RINGS TRUE, SERVES TO EXPLAIN ALERTS, ABSENCE OF GMP POLICE GUARD AT EMBASSY AND RESIDENCE, AND WHY NO CLEAR-CUT ACTION HAS BEEN FORTHCOMING FROM GOMR. RACIAL ASPECT OF SITUATION CLEARLY MAKES IT EXPLOSIVE AND EXPLAINS CAUTION OF MERINA-LED GOVT ABOUT MOVE AGAINST PREDOMINANTLY COTIER GMPP. RATSIMANDRAVA'S PRESS CONFERENCE STRIKES US AS PERSONALLY DEFENSIVE IN TONE. HE MAY SEE HIMSELF AS GOMR'S POTENTIAL SACRIFICIAL LAMB SINCE HE HAS ENEMIES AMONG MERINA ELITE AS WELL AS COTIERS. POSSIBILITY OF GOMR EXPANSION OF CABINET TO INCLUDE MORE COTIERS ALSO NOW GREATER.

7. SO FAR, IT APPEARS COUP ATTEMPT DID NOT INVOLVE DIRECT PARTICIPATION OF PSM, BUT COTIER-MERINA ELEMENT IN GMP SITUATION NOW AFFORDS RALLYING POINT FOR COTIER-PSM SUPPORT. COLONEL BRECHARD RAJAONARISON IS FORMER CHIEF OF CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 TANANA 00141 250936Z

STAFF OF ARMY WHO WAS EASED INTO NON-JOB BY GEN RAMANANTSOA BECAUSE OF HIS TIES TO PREVIOUS REGIME AND PROBABLY BECAUSE OF INCOMPETENCE AS WELL. HE IS KNOWN TO EMBASSY AS BEING LIKEABLE BUT NOT VERY CAPABLE. MAJOR ISTASSE WAS ALSO SIDELINED BY GOMR AFTER HIS PARTICIPATION ON WRONG SIDE OF "EVENTS OF 1972." END SUMMARY.
MENDENHALL

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NNN

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